

Statement of

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Before the

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**“Fighting Meth in America’s Heartland:
Assessing the Impact on Local Law Enforcement and Child Welfare Agencies”**

Chairman Souder, and distinguished members of the House Government Reform Committee, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, on behalf of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Administrator, Karen Tandy, I appreciate your invitation to testify today regarding the DEA’s efforts to combat methamphetamine trafficking and abuse across the United States.

Overview

Today, few communities in the United States have not felt the crushing impact of methamphetamine, which goes far beyond the actual trafficking and abuse of the drug and the numerous other crimes and acts of violence it creates. The devastating consequences of methamphetamine are felt across the country by individuals, governmental agencies, businesses and communities of all sizes. Americans are waging a daily battle against this drug.

The DEA is well aware that combating this drug requires a multi-faceted approach by law enforcement. In addition to our domestic and international enforcement efforts, the DEA is battling this drug through the efforts of our Office of Training, Hazardous Waste Disposal Program and Victim Witness Assistance Program.

The DEA’s Office of Training has shared our clandestine laboratory expertise by training thousands of our state and local partners from all the over country, as well as our international counterparts. Through our Hazardous Waste Disposal Program, we provide cleanup assistance to law enforcement agencies across the country, as they battle this drug. The DEA’s Victim Witness Assistance Program helps provide assistance for children and others, who in so many instances have been exposed to this drug and the toxic chemicals used in its manufacture.

DEA’s Clandestine Laboratory Training

The increasing number of clandestine laboratory seizures nationwide has spurred the demand from state and local law enforcement agencies for increased training on the processing

of laboratory sites. Our Office of Training has found that as the methamphetamine epidemic has relentlessly spread eastward, requests for training have been received from states that have historically not had to deal with the issue of clandestine laboratories. This training is vital to ensure that officers conducting laboratory investigations are provided with safe and efficient procedures for the processing of methamphetamine labs.

Since 1998, with funding originally received through the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) program and then through direct annual appropriations, the DEA has offered a strong training program for our state and local counterparts. The DEA provides basic and advanced clandestine laboratory safety training for state and local law enforcement officers and Special Agents at the DEA Clandestine Laboratory Training Facility. Each of our training courses exceeds the Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA)-mandated minimum safety requirements and is provided at no cost to qualified state and local law enforcement officers. The cost incurred by the DEA per student for the basic certification course offered to state and local officers is approximately \$4,360. This total amount includes approximately \$2,200 worth of personal protective equipment that is provided to each officer.

The basic certification provides instruction and hands on training that enables graduates to operate safely within the confines of the contaminated environment of a drug laboratory. The students also become well-versed in the use of personal protective equipment, and respiratory protection. The advanced "site-safety" course enables graduates to serve as the required "site-safety officer" at the lab site, and also to re-certify other officers in the field. We also provide tactical training, which address issues regarding the nature of the equipment and methods unique to clandestine drug operations. The Clandestine Laboratory Training Unit has also added a block of instruction dealing with drug endangered children. This block of instruction is provided to ensure that the proper steps are taken when a child/victim is discovered within the confines of a toxic drug laboratory. This training is designed to complement existing departmental policies regarding endangered children.

The DEA has trained over 8,600 State and local law enforcement personnel (plus 1,900 DEA employees) since 1998 to conduct clandestine laboratory investigations, dismantle seized labs and protect the public from methamphetamine lab toxic waste. As part of this training, approximately \$19 million in methamphetamine lab personal protective equipment has been provided to state and local law enforcement officers. Additionally, since 1999, the DEA has provided clandestine laboratory awareness training to approximately 17,000 students per year. The Office of Training also provides clandestine laboratory awareness and "train the trainer" programs that can be tailored for a specific agency's needs, with classes ranging in length from one to eight hours. We also provide in-service training and seminars for law enforcement groups such as the Clandestine Laboratory Investigator's Association and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. The Office of Training also conducts a number of courses off-site each year to meet regional training demands and provides annual recertification training as required by OSHA. The Clandestine Laboratory Training Unit has also provided training to fire departments, tactical units, and other federal agencies such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

In 2003, the Clandestine Laboratory Training Unit entered into a partnership the National Guard Counter-drug Training Center. The DEA's training supports 10 to 12 Basic Certification courses per year that are sponsored by the National Guard and we send an Agent/Instructor and a

Forensic Chemist to provide instruction at these courses. This training is for state and local officers only, and is conducted at various sites within the United States. By the completion of FY 2005, the Office of Training will have supported 27 National Guard Certification Courses.

The DEA also provides training to our foreign counterparts in all facets of clandestine drug laboratory investigations. Despite not falling under the OSHA requirements, most of our foreign counterparts are trained to OSHA standards. Since June 2003, we have provided training regarding lab investigations and prosecution to our Mexican counterparts on five occasions. This training was provided to over 200 officials who regulate precursor chemicals and pharmaceuticals at the state and federal level within Mexico, as well as agents from the Agencia Federal de Investigaciones (AFI) and several prosecutors within the Mexican Organized Crime Unit (SIEDO). The Unit has also supported basic certification courses in Lithuania, the Philippines, Indonesia, and awareness training for the U.S. Military in Afghanistan.

Importantly, the exchange of information does not stop upon the completion of the training course. Our instructors continue to provide assistance and expertise to our own Special Agents, as well as to state and local law enforcement, prosecutors, industry professionals and our foreign counterparts in order to ensure that they stay abreast of changes within this dynamic criminal environment. Our instructors have also provided their expertise in this area through published articles focusing on drug endangered children, booby traps, and personal protective equipment.

Hazardous Waste Cleanup

In FY 1988, the DEA's Hazardous Waste Disposal Program was established to assist our Special Agents in the management of the chemicals, waste and contaminated equipment seized at clandestine drug laboratories. Funding for this program was initially provided through the Asset Forfeiture Fund. In 1998, the DEA began receiving funding from the COPS program, and DEA Appropriated Funds in FY 1999, to support the cleanup of clandestine drug laboratories seized by state and local law enforcement. Together with the Asset Forfeiture Fund, these funding sources continue today.

When a federal, state or local agency seizes a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory, Environmental Protection Agency regulations require the agency to ensure that all hazardous waste materials are safely removed from the site. To facilitate the removal of these materials, in 1991, the DEA awarded the first private sector contracts for hazardous waste cleanup and disposal. This program promotes the safety of law enforcement personnel and the public by using qualified companies with specialized training and equipment to remove hazardous waste seized at clandestine drug laboratories. These contractors now provide response services to DEA, as well as state and local law enforcement officials nationwide. These contracts serve communities by removing the source-chemicals that may pose threats to the public, which also helps to protect the environment.

The DEA's hazardous waste program, with the assistance of the COPS program, supports and funds the cleanup of a majority of the laboratories seized in the United States. Between 1992 and 2004, the number of clandestine lab related cleanups increased from 394 to over 10,000. The cost of administering these state and local cleanups in FY 2004 was approximately \$17.8 million. Since we first began using contractor services in the early 1990s, the number of cleanups has skyrocketed, though the average cost per cleanup has greatly decreased. The average cost per

cleanup during the initial contract was approximately \$17,000. During FY 2002, the average cleanup cost dropped to approximately \$3,300, and currently, the average cost per cleanup is approximately \$2,000.

To further reduce the cost of lab cleanups, in FY 2004, we joined the Kentucky State Police to establish a pilot, clandestine lab “container program”, in Kentucky. The program allows trained Kentucky law enforcement officers to safely package and transport hazardous waste from the clandestine laboratory sites to a centralized secure container that meets all hazardous waste storage requirements. The waste is subsequently kept in the container until it can be removed by a DEA contractor. The container program has streamlined the laboratory cleanup process, by enabling law enforcement officials to manage small quantities of seized chemicals more quickly and efficiently. This container program has resulted in the reduction of operational costs, the length of time officers must remain at the lab sites, and the resulting overtime costs to law enforcement agencies. The current average cost of cleanup in this project is approximately \$350 (Note: this average cost is through the end of the third quarter of FY 2005. This does not take into consideration the cost of state/local personnel, training, equipment and start-up, operational and maintenance costs associated with the temporary storage areas). We are currently working to expand this program to several other states.

Victim Witness Assistance Program and Drug Endangered Children

More than any other controlled substance, methamphetamine trafficking endangers children through exposure to drug abuse, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste, fire, and explosions. An appalling example of methamphetamine-related abuse was discovered by DEA in Missouri during November 2004. During an enforcement operation targeting a suspected methamphetamine laboratory located in a home, three children, all less than five years of age, were found sleeping on chemical-soaked rugs. The residence was filled with insects and rodents and had no electricity or running water. Ironically, two guard dogs kept by the “cooks” to fend off law enforcement were also found: clean, healthy, and well-fed. The dogs actually ate off a dinner plate.

The DEA’s Victim Witness Assistance Program was implemented in October 1992. A key goal of this program is to provide assistance to victims of methamphetamine, particularly drug endangered children. Since being implemented, the DEA has enhanced its Victim Witness Assistance Program and each of our Field Divisions now has a Victim/Witness Coordinator to ensure that all endangered children are identified and that the child’s immediate safety is addressed at the scene by appropriate child welfare and health care service providers. Assistance has also been provided to vulnerable adults, individuals of domestic violence, and to customers and employees of businesses such as hotels and motels where methamphetamine has been produced or seized.

We also provide training on drug endangered children to federal, state and local law enforcement and to national, state and local victim organizations. The DEA serves as a resource for child protective service and school social workers, first responders, mail carriers and utility company personnel, all of whom may come in contact with labs and victims.

In order to provide the public with current information on methamphetamine and drug endangered children, the DEA participates in numerous local, state and national conferences and

exhibits. The issue of victim services is included as part of our Basic Agent Training, and also is presented to our management across the country.

The DEA recognizes that children exposed to methamphetamine are uniquely vulnerable to abuse and neglect. During the President's first term, the Administration began working with states to help implement Drug Endangered Children (DEC) programs, which establish teams of specialists to respond to situations where minors are found in or near methamphetamine laboratories, and are frequently sickened or burned from exposure to toxic chemicals. These programs are now operating in 25 states, with most being initiated with federal support. Additional teams are being developed across the country, and the Department of Justice and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) will continue to work directly with states to expand the DEC program.

Conclusion

Methamphetamine continues to take a terrible toll on this nation. The DEA is attacking this epidemic on all available fronts. The DEA's enforcement efforts are focused not only on the large-scale methamphetamine trafficking organizations distributing this drug in the U.S., but also on those involved in providing the precursor chemicals necessary to manufacture this poison.

The DEA is also working closely with our state and local law partners to assist in the elimination of the small toxic labs that have spread across the country like a wildfire. The DEA provides vital training and protective equipment to better prepare state and local law enforcement officers to investigate and dismantle these labs. The DEA's Hazardous Waste Program, with the assistance of grants to state and local law enforcement, supports and funds the cleanup of a majority of the laboratories seized in the United States. Over the years, this process has become more efficient and the cost per cleanup has been greatly reduced. The DEA has also taken an active role in the Victim Witness Assistance Program to assist methamphetamine's victims.

Thank you for your recognition of this important issue and the opportunity to testify here today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.